

CT-790

Benning flatbottom skiff

Solomons, Maryland

This vessel is a 16'3" long flat-bottomed, cross-planked skiff used under sail, oar, and power for crabbing and oystering by the Benning family of Galesville, Maryland from before 1920 to 1974. It is now in the collection of the Calvert Marine Museum. Built sometime before 1920, when an engine was added to supplement the sail rig, the Benning skiff is significant for being an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed, deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering--and for being one of the at least 15 regional variations of the skiff type to have been built in the Bay area.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. CT-790

Magi No. 0507905733

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic

and/or common Benning flatbottom skiff CMM 76-382

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town Solomons _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district _____

state Maryland _____ county Calvert

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Calvert Marine Museum

street & number _____ telephone no.: 326-3719

city, town Solomons _____ state and zip code Maryland 20688

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. _____ liber _____

street & number _____ folio _____

city, town _____ state _____

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title _____

date _____ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local ☐

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This is a flat-bottomed, cross-planked skiff used under sail, oar , and power for crabbing and gill-netting until 1974. Measuring 16'3" long, with a beam of 5'3" and a draft of 1'8", the boat was built sometime before 1920 (the year an engine was added to supplement the sail rig). The boat has a straight raking stem and a raking transom stern, and is painted white with gray topsides. As displayed at the Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, it shows the ways in which Bay-built craft could be adapted to different means of propulsion.

The skiff is cross-planked, with the planks rabbeted into the metal-reinforced plank keel and shoe, and fastened lengthwise with bilge stringers. In shape, she is straight-sided with some rocker to the sheer in her after -portions. The plank keel deepens into a skeg, extending to the transom line. The rudder is hung outboard on pintles and a rudder-post, and has a cutout to accomodate the two-blade propellor and its shaft. It is steered by an arrangement of ropes and pulleys and controlled by a steering stick placed amidships.

The boat is half-decked, with a slightly raised foredeck. The interior has a box built over the engine, a midships thwart, and a seat in the stern. Fittings include two pairs of rowlocks. The boat is exhibited with its original sail rig, a pair of oars, and its engine.

The sail rig consists of a single unstayed mast, stepped through a hole in the foredeck and set into the floorboards at the bow, and a sharp-headed canvas sail rigged with a sprit. The mast is raked about 15° aft. The sail, rigged with light cotton lines, is in poor condition.

The sail rig was replaced by a gasoline engine in about 1920 by Capt. Harry Benning, the skiff's owner. The centerboard slot was filled in and a one-cylinder Wisconsin/Clinton engine installed. After the skiff was donated to the Museum some restoration work was done. The foredeck, stern sheets, crab roller, and tiller were replaced and the rudder was refastened. The boat is painted white, with gray topsides and interior. The license number, MD 1426 W, is displayed on a wooden nameboard mounted on the bows below the sheer.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	c. 1900 - 1920	Builder/Architect	Unknown
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check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant for being an example of an important indigenous Bay craft--the V-bottomed deadrise skiff that developed in the 19th century for crabbing, fishing, and oystering, and for being an example associated with a particular family and business--the Benning family who operated an oyster packing plant in Galesville, Maryland.

The Chesapeake Bay crabbing skiff is an indigenous type which is to be seen in many different local forms and variations (at least 15), reflecting design innovations by particular builders or definite regional characteristics. The V-bottom, deadrise form, first seen in the local skiff/bateau vessel type, was later adapted by local boatbuilders to the larger skipjack, or two-sail bateau. Thus, these surviving examples of Chesapeake-area skiffs are important in understanding the construction techniques and design innovations still to be seen today in the surviving skipjack fleet. They also were the means of carrying out an important local occupation--crabbing, fishing, and oystering.

The Benning crab skiff, built sometime before 1920, when an engine was added to supplement the sail rig, is important as a common Bay-built type that illustrates how a single boat could be propelled under sail, oar, or power. Flat-bottomed and cross-planked, this skiff is typical of the several regional skiff types that were produced on the Bay between 1890 and 1920 for use in the inshore fisheries. The cross-planked form was easy and economical to built as it did not require a set of frames. It could also, as this example illustrates, be used under a variety of means of propulsion, depending on conditions and the work to be performed.

This skiff was used by the owner, Captain Harry Benning, from before 1920 until 1974. The Benning family owned an oyster packing plant in Galesville and the skiff was used in the business. Of additional interest is the fact that the Calvert Marine Museum possesses the family and business papers of the Benning family.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. CT-790

Howard I. Chapelle, Chesapeake Bay Crabbing Skiffs (St. Michaels: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, n.d.)

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951)

Benning Family MSS Collection, Calvert Marine Museum See also plans by W. Hall, {

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St.

telephone 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



CT-790

CT-790

Benning Skiff
Solomons, Md

bow

M. C. Wootton

4/84



CT-790

CT-790

Benning Skiff
Solomons, Md

stern
M.C. Wootton

4/84